DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 554 CS 213 455

AUTHOR Wells, Mary C.
TITLE Improving Students' Expertise and Attitudes during the Postwriting Stage of the Writing Process through Collaborative Revision.
PUB DATE May 92
NOTE 62p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Learning; *Critical Thinking; *Editing; Heterogeneous Grouping; High Schools; High School Students; Peer Evaluation; *Student Attitudes; Student Motivation; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS Process Approach (Writing)

ABSTRACT

A practicum addressed the problem of students' lack of fluency in standard English despite the traditional paradigm for formal grammar instruction and the emphasis on process writing in most English classrooms. Nineteen (English 2) high school students participated in peer editing groups in a collaborative learning environment. The solution strategy was: (1) to group students of varying fluency levels into editing teams; (2) to monitor errors and revisions via editing checklists; (3) to provide instruction on an as-needed basis; (4) to motivate students to teach and learn from each other; (5) to stimulate the critical thinking necessary for effective editing and proofreading; and (6) to improve attitudes concerning the need for consistent and accurate revision of writing drafts in the context of students' writing. After implementation of the collaborative revision plan, the target group demonstrated increased levels of fluency in postwriting skills. The results also demonstrated increased positivism toward the efficacy of learning and applying the conventions of standard English to students' writing. Conclusively, students benefitted from the strategy of peer collaboration and relevant grammar instruction provided in the context of students' writing. (Eight appendixes--surveying, monitoring, and testing instruments and student data--and 20 references are attached.) (Author/PRA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED347554

IMPROVING STUDENTS' EXPERTISE AND ATTITUDES DURING THE POSTWRITING STAGE OF THE WRITING PROCESS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE REVISION

by

Mary C. Wells

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary C. Wells

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Practicum Report

submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education, Nova University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

May/1992

CS213455

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

Improving Students' Expertise and Attitudes During the Postwriting Stage of the Writing Process Through Collaborative Revision.
Wells, Mary C., 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Peer Teaching/ Peer Evaluation/ Cooperative Learning/ Writing Processes/ Writing Instruction/ Editing/ Student Attitudes/ Secondary Education/

Despite the traditional paradigm for formal grammar instruction and the emphasis on process writing in most English classrooms, many students continue to evidence a lack of fluency in standard English. To address the problem, the target population participated in peer editing groups in a collaborative learning environment. The solution strategy was (1) to group students of varying fluency levels into editing teams, (2) to monitor errors and revisions via editing checklists, (3) to provide instruction on an as-needed basis, (4) to motivate students to teach and learn from each other, (5) to stimulate the critical thinking necessary for effective editing and proofreading, and (6) to improve attitudes concerning the need for consistent and accurate revision of writing drafts in the context of students' writing.

After implementation of the collaborative revision plan, the target group demonstrated increased levels of fluency in postwriting skills. The results also demonstrated increased positivism toward the efficacy of learning and applying the conventions of standard English to students' writing. Conclusively, students benefited from the strategy of peer collaboration and relevant grammar instruction provided in the context of students' writing. Appendices include surveying, monitoring, and testing instruments, and student data.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: Mary C. Wells
Student's name

Table of Contents

Page

Title Page.....i

Abstract.....ii

Authorship Statement.....iii

Observer Verification.....iv

Table of Contents.....v

Chapters

I. Purpose.....1

II. Research and Solution Strategy.....10

III. Method.....21

IV. Results.....30

V. Recommendations.....35

Reference List.....37

Appendices

Appendix A: English Teacher Survey.....40

Appendix B: Teacher Survey.....42

Appendix C: Student Survey.....44

Appendix D: Pretest/Posttest.....48

Appendix E: Complete Editing Checklist.....50

Appendix F: Pretest/Posttest Results.....52

Appendix G: Student Writing Analysis Results.....54

Appendix H: Student Survey Results.....56

CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The setting was a rural county comprised of approximately 750 square miles and a population of nearly 10,000. The majority of the population derived income from state and local government employment, and from agricultural and forestry-related industries. Most of the inhabitants were from low socio-economic backgrounds. The nearest urban area was 50 miles away.

The county was served by one high school, grades 7 to 12, and two elementary schools, grades K to 6. The specific setting for the research was the high school, which had a student population of 749. The ethnic composition was 673 Caucasian, 68 Black, three Hispanic, and four Asian students. Forty-nine faculty members and four administrators, plus support personnel, formed the high school educational team. The county's instructional services and general services offices were located on campus.

The target population was 19 English II students. The class of nine white females and 10 white males was

heterogeneously grouped. The levels of individual ability and motivation, previous academic achievement, and current performance ranged from extremely high to moderately low. Of the 19 students, three were in ninth grade; 15 were in tenth grade; and one was in eleventh grade.

The administrator interested in the problem being addressed was the principal of the high school. He acknowledged that writing well is integral to many students' future success. As a former English instructor, he concurred that traditional methods of writing instruction have not been wholly effective; therefore, he was supportive of this plan to improve students' writing through a collaborative learning environment.

The researcher had been an English teacher for 10 years and a department chair for three years at the high school. Teaching assignments included one English II, two English III, and two English IV classes. The researcher held a B.A. in English.

Informal interviews with five members of the English department, 11 teachers in other academic disciplines, and four administrators, as well as extensive personal

observation and participation in workshops at the Florida Council of Teachers of English conferences, suggested the problem. Although students at the high school probably displayed no more reluctance to revise than students elsewhere, students' disregard for the postwriting stage or inability to edit and proofread final drafts according to the conventions of standard written English was a significant problem. Any means of encouraging students to complete the postwriting stage of the writing process critically and accurately was of personal and professional importance to the researcher.

Problem Statement

Many students evidence a definite inability to edit and proofread during the postwriting stage of the writing process. For those individuals, submitting a neatly recopied, but essentially unchanged, final draft is typical. The language instruction traditional to teaching students the skills necessary to edit and proofread writing drafts effectively continues to receive enthusiastic support in the grammar curricula of many American schools. However, despite emphasis on formal grammar instruction and the writing process, the problem of students' lacking command of the conventions of

standard English remains widespread. Many students evidence a lack of fluency, generally, and a negative attitude toward learning to use language proficiently in oral and written communication.

Documentation for the specific problem being addressed was based on personal observations of the researcher; interviews with other classroom teachers from the high school, as well as from other school districts; surveys of teachers, including both English instructors and teachers in other academic disciplines; a survey of students; and, finally, a pretest of postwriting skills.

An analysis of the voluntary English faculty survey (Appendix A:40) clearly confirmed that students' writing was in need of improvement, particularly in the postwriting stage. Four of the five English teachers responded. Predictably, 100 percent agreed that the writing process was emphasized; however, 75 percent responded that prewriting and writing stages were stressed more heavily than the postwriting stage. Although all teachers concurred that students spent an acceptable amount of time and effort editing and proofreading, 100 percent agreed that students' skills were not commensurate with the level of expertise

expected of specific grade levels. All teachers indicated that students' postwriting efforts were primarily the result of the instructor's insistence. Fifty percent indicated that collaborative learning settings were sometimes used to teach at least some steps of the writing process; an equal percentage stated that group techniques were not currently included in their strategies currently used for teaching writing.

In a survey of teachers in academic disciplines other than English (Appendix B:42), students' language skills were deemed desirable, but deficient. Twenty-five teachers responded. Ninety-two percent stated that writing well was emphasized in their classrooms. While fifty-six percent agreed that students' effort and time on editing and proofreading were involuntary, but acceptable, only 28 percent stated that students' abilities coincided with grade-level expectations. Eighty-eight percent indicated that the teacher's insistence was a motivating force behind writing revision. Forty percent had observed students assisting each other to improve writing.

In a survey of the target group (Appendix C:44), students were questioned about personal writing attitudes

and habits. Nineteen students responded. Although twenty-one percent indicated a general dislike for classes in which writing was required, 68 percent expressed a positive attitude about writing generally. Sixty-eight percent stated that, even though writing is typically an individual activity, writing well was not difficult solely for that reason. When asked if individual choices of topics would stimulate increased efforts to improve students' own writing, a resounding 95 percent answered affirmatively. Seventy-nine percent acknowledged that writing well enhanced students' opportunities for successful careers. Only 10 percent indicated that incorrect and ineffective writing did not reflect negatively on the individual students' respective academic abilities. Eighty-four percent of the students surveyed indicated a willingness to revise in order to improve grades; however, only 53 percent indicated that the ability to write well was a source of personal pride.

When questioned about individual writing habits, 42 percent acknowledged procrastination as a negative factor in completing writing assignments. Only 11 percent stated that final drafts were neater, but essentially unrevised, copies of initial drafts. Eighty-nine percent

indicated that final drafts differed significantly from original drafts. Forty-seven percent knew at least several ways to begin revising writing during the postwriting stage; however, 42 percent indicated no knowledge necessary to revise effectively. Finally, 68 percent indicated that working within a group, rather than in isolation, would enhance the desire to write well. Fifty-eight percent acknowledged frequently requesting the assistance of another student or a teacher to improve writing. Seventy-three percent acknowledged learning ways to improve their own writing from other students.

In general, educators consistently expressed the continuing need for improving students' use of language, particularly in written communication. Overall, students deemed the skills necessary for editing and proofreading desirable, but often too numerous and difficult to apply consistently. Both educators and students acknowledged the myriad of elements involved in proficient use of language as a major factor in the problem. Students' responses reinforced the researcher's theory that a postwriting system focused on peer teaching in a collaborative learning environment would likely

facilitate both the correctness and, consequently, the effectiveness of students' writing.

A pretest (Appendix D:48) was administered to the target group. The percentages of 80 to 100 percent, 60 to 79 percent, and 0 to 59 percent were utilized to rank students as proficient, average, or deficient writers, respectively, according to the level of ability each student demonstrated in the prestest. Twenty-six percent of the nineteen students identified and corrected 80 percent or more of the total number of errors in standard usage on the pretest. Thirty-seven percent accurately revised between 60 and 79 percent of the errors. Thirty-seven percent of the target group revised less than 60 percent of the errors correctly.

The analyses of both the teacher and the student surveys and the pretest scores supported the fact that a discrepancy existed between the expected writing levels of students and observed writing abilities. It was evident that the target group was in need of assistance if the students were to learn and incorporate conventions of standard English and other revision skills essential to completing the postwriting stage of the writing process successfully.

Outcome Objectives

After a twelve-week implementation period of peer editing and teaching in a collaborative learning environment, several outcomes were to be observed among students in the target group. The first expected outcome was that, following participation in collaborative learning groups, each student would independently identify and correct the errors in conventional usage of standard English with at least 80 percent accuracy as measured on the posttest (Appendix D:48). The second expected outcome was that, after participation in collaborative learning groups, 80 percent of the target group would independently and critically analyze the multi-paragraph essay in order to determine the thesis statement, supporting ideas, and structure as measured on the posttest (Appendix D:48). The third objective was that, after participation in collaborative learning groups, 100 percent of the students would indicate a neutral or positive attitude toward editing and proofreading writing as measured on a post-implementation student survey (Appendix C:44).

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

In the past several decades, advocates of the writing process and the state government's "Gordon Rule" have heavily influenced schools' language curricula. The "Gordon Rule," in effect in many secondary and postsecondary schools, restricts class size and requires students to write a legislated number of words. Proof of the required minimum number of words written, and control over the number of students in each class seem to satisfy most state legislators and all auditors. Although the required quantity of writing is achieved without controversy, the desired quality of writing often is not. Despite the emphasis on written communication skills, the act of writing alone fails to produce effective writers. As Fox and Suhor (1986:35) astutely observed, "writing alone in a composition classroom will not automatically produce better writers."

The intent of this research was to develop an effective teaching strategy to improve students' levels of expertise and to encourage more positive attitudes during the postwriting stage of the writing process. The

solution to the problem incorporated research on (1) the stages of the writing process, (2) the ineffectiveness of the formal grammar instruction paradigm in many classrooms, (3) collaborative learning environments, (4) critical thinking strategies, and (5) technology in the writing classroom.

The continuing emphasis on teaching the writing process accurately acknowledges and stresses the systematic nature and importance of written communication. Three stages constitute the process: prewriting, writing and postwriting. Each stage incorporates several steps. During the prewriting stage, students are strongly encouraged to transcribe their inner thoughts quickly, to avoid the distracting concerns of complying with the conventions of standard English. In the writing stage, purpose, content, and organization are the focus. Concentration on conventions of standard written English is inappropriate. Only in the postwriting stage, which includes the steps of editing and proofreading, does the correctness of the draft become the center of students' and teachers' attention.

Negligible controversy exists over the value of instructors' teaching writing, and students' learning to

write, via the stages of the writing process. However, when both teachers' and students' time and effort in the classroom are allocated, the stages of prewriting and writing tend to receive the most attention. According to Schafer (1988:46), prior to the advent of process writing, "most teachers overemphasized editing and slighted or ignored prewriting and revision. Now...[m]any teachers are overemphasizing prewriting and activities to develop fluency and are slighting or ignoring editing." Equal attention during the postwriting stage necessitates a solution to the problem of precisely how to incorporate standard English usage most effectively into the language curriculum. Disagreement over the place of grammar in the teaching of writing impedes students' progress toward becoming fluent writers. As a result, students' final drafts often contain so many errors that the content remains obscured.

The close relationship between knowing how to incorporate standard usage and knowing how to write effectively are undeniable. The efforts to formulate and communicate thoughts in the prewriting and writing stages are often painstaking; however, eventually all writers encounter what Donovan (1990:62) termed the "Dragon

Grammaticus." Donovan's metaphor is humorous, but pointed. Under the threat of this "predator" stalking the language classroom, some teachers stage a full retreat, ignoring the essentials of students' learning to understand and to use standard English in writing. Rather than abandoning grammar, other instructors attempt to dominate the "dragon" by teaching grammar in traditional manner, either in isolation from, or to the exclusion of, the act of writing. Both options ultimately harm students' opportunities to succeed as writers. Still other teachers, however, make the "Dragon Grammaticus" comfortable in the postwriting classroom. Consequently, the necessary rules of standard usage are taught in the context of editing and proofreading students' writing. The "dragon" is welcome, no longer threatening; and the value of teaching and learning the conventions of standard written English assumes a rightful place in the language curriculum.

According to Chadwick (1982:54), grammar is important. Knowledge of "sentence structure, usage, punctuation, and paragraph development contributes to an understanding--and an appreciation--of writing...because such knowledge gives writers a structure within which to

work." Sledd (1986:28) argued that students' command of standard English is "undoubtedly an economic, social, and political advantage in the United States today." According to Tabbert (1986), citizens of literate societies, including those of the business community, strongly expect the educated population to know and incorporate basic rules of conventional usage into spoken and written discourse. Concurrently, Naisbitt (1984:78) predicted that "English will continue to grow as a business language." If American students are to achieve fluency in both spoken and written English, which Naisbitt asserted is integral to success in the future, students must learn and apply the rules of conventional English. Chadwick (1982:55) argued that abandoning instruction in grammar "is not fair to students who must survive in a world bound by rules, regulations, procedures, letters, memos." The most effective strategy for facilitating fluency is for students to learn and practice the conventions of standard written English in the context of the students' own writing.

Meyer, Youga and Flint-Ferguson (1990:66) contended that, in most American schools today, "Grammar is very often taught but very seldom learned." Though students

appear not to be learning standard English conventions from the traditional way in which grammar is presently taught, "most grammar curricula do not reflect new ways of teaching but simply rely on the same old techniques despite their ineffectiveness." Calkins' (1986:195) viewpoint was adamant: "The research is conclusive. Teaching formal grammar has no effect on the quality of student writing." Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, researchers cited by Calkins (1986:195), concluded, in strong and unqualified terms, that teaching formal grammar has a "negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing." Regardless of energy expended, students remain ineffective writers, and, frequently, frustrated learners.

Language experts concurred that students' ability to write grammatically matters. Calkins (1986:196) asserted that the content of student papers "log jammed with errors...is difficult to appreciate and the errors are impossible to overlook." Too many students' efforts are negated by inadequate command of standard English. Tsujimoto (1988:22) stated that student writing is

frequently "egregiously flawed because students, never having been taught, do not know how to revise their work. Revision...is nothing more than tedious recopying, the penalty exacted for incorrect spelling, punctuation, and grammar." The result of this type of revision is not only futile but also, almost invariably, counterproductive to the goals of the writing classroom. If English instructors are to teach students' to write effectively, the conventions of standard written English must be integrated into the language curriculum. Schafer (1988) recommended alternating between brief, systematic instruction, and indirect instruction in punctuation. It is logical that his advice would apply equally well to grammar instruction. Schafer's (1988:49) suggestion may help teachers "--by bringing process and product together--teach writing more effectively."

Rosen (1987:64) advocated allowing students to write, providing time for all stages of the writing process, and establishing editing workshops. The editing workshop establishes a relaxed, supportive atmosphere in which students may learn to revise writing according to the conventions of standard written English. Nevertheless, postwriting revision still demands an objective, critical look at both major and minor concerns of writing. Because

writing can be an intensely personal experience, Elbow, as cited in Tsujimoto (1988), suggested that revision is learned most easily by working on someone else's writing. Tsujimoto (1988:23) asserted that "revising other people's work nurtures in the reviser the cold calculation necessary when reseeing, judging, and recasting their own work." In the editing workshop, such objectivity is required since errors in writing intrude upon the consciousness of the reader and detract from the author's message.

Although students are focused on correctness during the postwriting stage, the process of revision remains complex and somewhat diffused because of the myriad of elements involved. Hairston (1986) accurately differentiated among the kinds of revision students are involved in, such as local and global, as well as immediate and delayed revision. Every writer, in the view of Hairston, probably uses all of these different revision methods at various times. Santa, Dailey and Nelson (1985:347) noted that "the editing process encourages critical evaluation and thought." Revision requires students to apply thinking skills. Instructors who teach students to edit their own writing in the postwriting stage, therefore, provide an essential component of the

writing process and, concomitantly, encourage the critical thinking essential to writing well.

Scardamalia and Bereiter, as cited by Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991:38), suggested that information from "a detailed cognitive analysis of the activities of expert writers" encourages "'knowledge transforming,' which incorporates the linear generation of text but is organized around a more complex structure of goal setting and problem solving." By experiencing the role of writing critic, an analytical position concerned with the monitoring and problem-solving processes inherent to critical thinking, the students become what Collins, Brown, and Holum defined as "apprentices." Through "apprenticeship" in an editing workshop environment, students have an opportunity to gain some of the experiences which lead toward producing higher-quality text. Learning to think critically about writing is imperative to the total success of both the editing workshop method and the writing process.

The cooperative learning frameworks of the editing workshop are, according to McManus and Kirby (1988:78), "changing the quality of intellectual growth in many English classrooms." Peer group response and instruction, initiated and encouraged by classroom teachers, has expanded in several directions, including editing

workshops, writing centers, and team writing competitions (Kelly, Hall, and Small, 1984). Marcus (1984:66) advocated writing centers as "a setting where enthusiastic, non-judgmental peers...tutor their fellow students." Sultan (1988:68), who learned from firsthand experience with writing response groups, observed that such groups "provide a viable alternative to teacher-dominated response to writing." In the view of Lardner (1989:93), teachers using peer response, tutors, and evaluation to teach writing will, at the very least, enjoy "improved understanding of those kids with whom they are working--and from whom they are learning--now." Lardner (1989:94) noted that peer response incorporates "what is perhaps essential in the act of writing, that is, a process through which writers and their readers influence each other." At the conclusion of editing and writing workshops, students frequently and appropriately produce anthologies of their collective writings. The act of sharing ownership of the writing in published form often stimulates pride and enthusiasm among students. Moffett (1983) encouraged showcasing student writings, as well as producing books of student-selected writings.

Research on the postwriting stage of the writing process is conclusive: the traditional paradigm of

extensive, formal grammar instruction is ineffective, at best, and detrimental, at worst, for teaching students to write. Research and teachers' classroom experiences indicate that memorization of standard English conventions in isolation from the experience of writing fails to accomplish effective writing. The chosen solution of employing peer response and instruction in a cooperative learning environment presents both teachers and students with the opportunity to succeed. Cooperative learning, along with the development of critical thinking processes and skills required in revising writing, offers the most effective and sound method for encouraging students to learn and to apply the conventions of standard English to their own and others' writing. Incorporating word-processing and electronic scanning allows students to experience, in part, a portion of the technology that will virtually dominate their adult lives. Students who accept the invitation to write about personally chosen topics, and to publish those writings in student-produced books, are more likely to develop and sustain pride in learning to write effectively. Peer collaboration in the editing workshop, while encouraging students to depend upon one another for the present, offers individuals the opportunity to become independent writers in the future.

CHAPTER III

Method

During the twelve-week implementation of the plan, the target group met with the instructor for 50 minutes daily. Based on rankings determined by pretest scores, students were assigned to small, heterogeneous groups of four to five students. The groups collaborated during editing and proofreading activities. Students were actively engaged in critiquing each other's writing, and, concomitantly, evaluating the thought processes behind each student's written words and ideas. The collaborative learning setting provided a supportive, but structured, environment for applying and practicing skills formally introduced in whole class instruction and discussion, and learning activities during three days of the week. The goal of the plan was to facilitate students' learning to revise writing more effectively, more easily, more critically, and more willingly by providing the cooperative environment of an editing workshop.

Topics for writing were individually chosen, but related, in some manner, to a guiding theme decided upon

by the students. When the rough drafts were completed, the students in each group read and evaluated their peers' writings via an editing checklist (Appendix E:50). The checklist was limited initially, and expanded systematically during the implementation period to incorporate other aspects of writing revision presented during whole class instruction and discussion. Initially, the students focused on evaluating the purpose, content, and organization of students' drafts. Eventually, the syntax, diction, grammar, punctuation, and spelling in students' writing were discussed, critiqued, and added, one by one, to the editing checklist. In the final two weeks, students selected, polished, and published their writings in a class anthology.

Extended use of peer evaluation, tutors, and conferences; collaborative learning environment and activities; critical thinking and problem-solving exercises; and consistent reinforcement concerning the conventions of standard written English resulted in more effectively written final drafts, and in more willingness to revise closely. Careful monitoring of students' responses and behaviors enabled the instructor to adjust

the plan as necessary. Individual and small group instruction was provided when appropriate, and the number of class periods for editing was altered when necessary.

At the conclusion of the implementation period, the target group was asked to complete a student survey (Appendix C:44) and a posttest (Appendix D:48) identical to the pre-implementation instruments. The results of both surveys were compared to evaluate one of the three objectives of the plan. The posttest, however, was utilized to evaluate two objectives: (1) the students' ability to locate and correct errors in standard written English in the posttest, and (2) the students' ability to analyze and identify the posttest's thesis statement, supporting ideas, and structure. Pretest and posttest scores for editing standard English usage errors were compared and evaluated. Finally, the accuracy of students' critical analyses of the posttest's structure was determined.

Implementation Plan

Week One

During the first week, students were heterogeneously grouped according to ranking on the pretest. Each group included a proficient, several average, and several

deficient writers. The design of the classroom setting, the production of a class anthology, and the procedures for organizing and monitoring group activities were explained. A working title for the anthology was determined by the students.

Necessary paraphernalia for workshop activities was supplied and stored in the file drawer designated for each group's use. For written revision activities, each member in the group used one of five differently colored pens. A distinctive color for each group member made that particular student's suggestions for revision on checklists and on drafts easily identifiable for other students and the instructor.

As an initial group-building activity, each group collaborated to create a distinctive group epithet, and a group logo. The name and logo were electronically scanned and reproduced on each group's editing checklists and file drawer to stimulate interest and group cohesion.

Weeks Two and Three

During the second and third weeks of the plan's implementation, the editing activities centered on the basic content and structure of student writings. Whole class instruction and discussion focused briefly, but

specifically, on the need for clear, logical organization, as well as for the establishment of the writer's voice and audience. Choice of topic for writing remained individual.

When drafts reached the postwriting stage, students read and evaluated each individual's writing on one of the blank editing checklists circulated with each draft. Suggestions and questions concerning each draft were made on the checklist. Each student detached the completed checklist and returned the checklist to the writer. After group members had completed checklists for each writing, students began to confer and assist each other with problems. The teacher circulated to encourage students, facilitate group work, and offer suggestions as students revised. Students who became interested in polishing a particular piece of writing were encouraged to submit successive drafts to the group for evaluation.

Minor problems encountered during the groups' revision activities were noted. Two individuals were discreetly reassigned to other groups for more productive intragroup relationships. Also, the use of specifically colored pens for specific students' editing remarks proved to be a logistical impediment at various times

during implementation. However, the system proved to be sufficiently flexible and, when appropriate, was easily altered.

Weeks Four and Five

The focus during the fourth and fifth weeks of the editing workshop was on syntax, diction, theme and clarity. The procedure for whole and small group activities and discussion was identical to that of weeks two and three. The checklist was updated to include the revision areas discussed during that two-week period.

Weeks Six, Seven, and Eight

Problems with verb and pronoun usage, subject-verb agreement, plus any other grammatical concerns indicated by the revision pretest, were the focus. Established workshop procedures were followed. Since there were no computers in the classroom, some students shared computers and software for word-processing and grammatical assistance on the two IBM-compatibles located in the media center. Computer time was generally minimal due to the absence of a computer laboratory accessible to the general student population attending the high school. For that reason, extensive use of technology in

instruction and activities was not possible at the school site.

Weeks Nine and Ten

Punctuation and capitalization were added, and the established routine was followed.

Weeks Eleven and Twelve

During the final two weeks, students chose and prepared writings for publication. Each small group collaborated to make decisions concerning the selections and arrangement of the group's chapter in the anthology. Artwork was included. A support services aide photographically reproduced the pages. Finally, students, assisted by the media specialist, bound copies of the class' book. As agreed, the media specialist featured the book in the sidewalk display case during the last week of school. Each student in class received a personal copy.

Evaluation of Implementation Plan

During the course of the implementation period, the writer observed one noteworthy concern related to the use of technology in the editing workshop. The presence of a computer laboratory generally available for student use would have been advantageous to the overall effectiveness

of the editing workshop. Access to word-processing technology would likely have eliminated, to a significant degree, the undeniable tedium and time required for manually recopying revised drafts following editing and proofreading activities.

Although the editing workshop demands no technological resources for implementation, the use of word-processing technology would have had several positive effects on the plan. First, more efficient use of instructional time, as well as students' increased familiarity with currently available technology, would have been possible. Word-processed documents would also have been more easily and quickly read than handwritten drafts. Second, incorporating complementary software, such as desktop publishing and graphics programs, would have enhanced the visual appeal of students' publications. A third distinct advantage would have been a less cumbersome, and considerably more immediate, system for monitoring and responding to students' writing errors. Finally, in a computer laboratory, the setting would have more closely replicated the working environment of students' future employment.

Despite the inaccessibility of adequate word-processing resouces, the collaborative strategy, as implemented, directly and positively impacted students' abilities to perform the postwriting stage of the writing process with significantly more skill. Students were provided multiple opportunities to use critical thinking skills and editing expertise to evaluate each other's writing, identify problems or errors, and offer solutions. The single modification suggested for future implementations is access to word-processing resources. If the editing workshop were established in a setting equipped with the appropriate technology, students' opportunities to learn to edit and proofread more effectively and efficaciously would be significantly enhanced.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The plan to improve the expertise and attitudes of students during the postwriting stage of the writing process can be evaluated by data gathered from the following sources: (1) a comparison of the students' editing skills measured by pretest and posttest scores (Appendix F:52); (2) the results of the students' critical analyses of the posttest for thesis, supporting ideas, and structure (Appendix G:54); and (3) a comparison of the results of the initial and post-implementation student surveys (Appendix H:56).

After a twelve-week implementation period of peer editing and teaching in a collaborative learning environment, the target group's posttest scores failed to yield the expected results that 100 percent of the students would score at least 80 percent on the posttest. A comparison of the pretest and posttest percentages of errors in standard English independently identified and corrected by individual students indicated that 63 percent scored between 80 and 100 percent accuracy. Twenty-six percent scored between 60 and 79 percent, and

11 percent scored between 0 and 59 percent on the posttest. Although the first objective did not meet the stated, but perhaps unrealistic, criteria of 100 percent, 89 percent of the target group demonstrated average or proficient editing skills. Participation in the editing workshop clearly improved students' ability to complete the postwriting stage of the writing process with improved skills expertise in employing the conventions of standard written English. The complete results of the comparison of pretest and posttest scores are shown in Appendix F:52.

The expected outcome that 80 percent of the students in the target group would critically analyze the posttest for content and structure was surpassed. Although all students in the target group lacked the skill to correct specific errors on a proficient level, ninety-five percent of the students performed the critical thinking processes necessary to determine the thesis statement, supporting ideas, and structure of the posttest independently. The complete results of the students' analyses of the posttest are shown in Appendix G:54.

A comparison of the initial and post-implementation student surveys indicated that 100 percent of the target

group indicated a neutral or positive attitude toward editing and proofreading writing. This objective was measured by evaluating students' responses to the sixth, seventh, and eighth statements on the student survey (Appendix H:56). One hundred percent of the students indicated a neutral or positive attitude toward effectively revising, rather than neatly recopying, writing drafts. One hundred percent of the target group acknowledged the individual skills to improve writing in several ways through revision. Finally, one hundred percent indicated willingness to revise to improve writing grades. The positivism expressed by the target group suggests that, even though not all the students demonstrated average and proficient levels of editing skills on the posttest, all students evidenced the attitude necessary to gain expertise in the future. In addition to students' positivism toward completing the postwriting stage of the writing process, a majority of the target group indicated that collaboration and peer editing significantly increased students' ability to write more effectively. Eighty-nine percent stated that requesting and receiving assistance from a peer or teacher to improve writing was desirable and productive

during the postwriting stage. The complete results of the initial and the post-implementation surveys are compared in Appendix H:56.

The plan to improve the students' attitudes and levels of expertise during the postwriting stage of the writing process exceeded the second and third objectives established. Although only 63 percent of the target group scored in the 80 to 100 percent range, the posttest results suggest that students participating in the plan, perhaps extended throughout the school year, would likely gain a level of editing skills commensurate with grade level expectations. In addition, students benefited from participating in the critical thinking activities essential to effective writing revision and from engaging extensively in collaborative problem-solving situations. Finally, the positive attitudes toward writing revision evident in students' willingness to improve writing through peer editing and contextual learning establish a firm foundation for continuing the collaboration of editing workshops in the English curriculum. The integration and extension of the collaborative editing strategy into the writing classroom has the potential to improve students' levels of expertise by encouraging

students to learn and employ the conventions of standard written English effectively in the context of the students' own writing.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The results of the plan have been disseminated to the superintendent of schools, the principal, and the English faculty of the high school. English teachers have been encouraged to incorporate collaborative editing groups as an effective means of increasing students' ability and willingness to employ the conventions of standard written English effectively and consistently.

The integration of editing groups, contextual learning, peer teaching, critical analysis, and technology offers a strategy for teaching and learning effective writing in the English classroom. The problematic level of frustration and ineffectiveness experienced by teachers who attempt to teach the rules of standard written English isolated from the context of students' writing, and the resulting lack of written communication skills among students who fail to learn and apply those rules in their writing, is alleviated in the collaborative editing setting.

Through the cooperative learning strategy, students can acquire the level of proficiency essential to

achieving fluency in standard written English. Students' more positive perception of the immediate and future benefits of learning to write effectively, in turn, fosters higher levels of individual confidence and encourages the further development and articulation of students' thoughts. In the final analysis, the collaborative editing environment can only serve to enhance both the students', as well as the educational community's, opportunity to succeed.

Reference List

Calkins, Lucy M. The Art of Teaching Writing, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986.

Chadwick, Bruce. "Writers and Grammar: An Image Problem." English Journal, April 1982, pp. 54-55.

Collins, Allan, John S. Brown, and Ann Holum. "Cognitive Apprenticeship: Making Thinking Visible." American Educator, Winter 1991, pp. 6-11, 38-46.

Donovan, Jeanne M. "Resurrect the 'Dragon Grammaticus.'" English Journal, January 1990, pp. 62-65.

Fox, Deborah, and Charles Suhor. "Limitations of Free Writing." English Journal, December 1986, pp. 34-36.

Hairston, Maxine C. Successful Writing. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986.

Kelly, Patricia, Mary P. Hall, and Robert C. Small, Jr. "Composition Through the Team Approach." English Journal, September 1984, pp. 71-74.

Lardner, Ted. "Teaching Writing, Learning Writing: Teacher Research in an English Class." English Journal, February 1989, pp. 93-94.

McManus, Ginger, and Dan Kirby. "Using Peer Group Instruction to Teach Writing." English Journal, March 1988, pp. 78-79.

Marcus, Harriet. "The Writing Center: Peer Tutoring in a Supportive Setting." English Journal, September 1984, pp. 66-67.

Meyer, Jim, Jan Youga, and Janis Flint-Ferguson. "Grammar in Context: Why and How." English Journal, January 1990, pp. 66-70.

Moffett, James. Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13, New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1983.

Naisbitt, John. Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives, New York: Warner Books, 1984.

Rosen, Lois M. "Developing Correctness in Student Writing: Alternatives to the Error Hunt." English Journal, March 1987, pp. 62-69.

Santa, Carol M., Susan C. Dailey, and Maryline Nelson. "Free Response and Opinion-Proof: A Reading and Writing Strategy for Middle Grade and Secondary Teachers." Journal of Reading, January 1985, pp. 346-352.

Schafer, John C. "Punctuation and Process: A Matter of Emphasis." English Journal, December 1988, pp. 46-49.

Sledd, James. "A Basic Incompetence in the Defining of Basic Competencies." English Journal, November 1986, pp. 26-28.

Sultan, Gerry. "No More Sixes, Nines, and Red Lines: Peer Groups and Revision." English Journal, September 1988, pp. 65-68.

Tabbert, Russell. "Parsing the Question 'Why Teach Grammar?'" English Journal, December 1984, pp. 38-42.

Tsujimoto, Joseph I. Teaching Poetry Writing to Adolescents, Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1988.

Appendices

Appendix A

English Teacher Survey

Please respond to the following statements in the manner which you choose. No names are necessary. The information you supply will be tabulated and analyzed for research purposes.

1. I emphasize the writing process to my students.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

2. I spend more time emphasizing the initial steps of the writing process than the final steps.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

3. When I insist, my students spend an acceptable amount of time and effort editing and proofing their writing.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

4. My students are capable of editing and proofreading their writing on an acceptable level for their grade/s in school.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

5. My students voluntarily edit and proofread their writing, even if I don't insist.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

6. One of the techniques I use to teach writing, including the editing and proofing steps of the writing process, is collaborative learning situations.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Appendix B

Teacher Survey

Please respond to the following statements in the manner which you choose. No names are necessary. The information you supply will be tabulated and analyzed for research purposes.

1. I emphasize good writing skills to my students.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

2. When I insist, my students spend an acceptable amount of time and effort editing and proofing their written assignments.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

3. My students have the writing skills necessary to edit and proofread their writing on an acceptable level for their grade/s in school.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

4. My students voluntarily edit and proofread their writing, even if I don't insist.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

5. I have observed students helping other students to improve their writing.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Am indifferent
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Appendix C

Student Survey

Please respond to the following statements in the manner which you choose. There are no correct or incorrect answers. No names are required. The information you supply will be tabulated and analyzed for research purposes.

Please check the answer that best matches your personal attitudes and habits about writing.

ATTITUDES ABOUT WRITING

1. I generally dislike classes in which writing is required.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

2. Writing is difficult for me, mainly because I have to do it all by myself.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

3. I would be willing try to write better if I could write about something that was interesting to me personally.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

4. Writing well is important to me. To enjoy a successful career, I must be able to write clearly and correctly.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

WRITING HABITS

5. When a writing assignment is given, I wait until the last minute and do not give the assignment much time or thought.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

6. When I have to turn in both a rough and a final draft of my writing, I make no changes and correct no errors. My final draft is a very neat copy of my rough draft.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

7. When a teacher suggests that I try to improve my writing by revising it, I know several ways to do just that.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

8. I am willing to revise my writing because my grade will improve.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

9. I take pride in writing well because my writing is a direct reflection of me and my abilities.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

10. I would make more of an effort to improve and correct my writing if I could work with a group of students instead of by myself.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

11. I frequently try to improve my writing by asking another student or teacher to read what I have written.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

12. Sometimes I learn something from another student that helps to make my own writing better.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Have no opinion
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

Appendix D

Pretest/Posttest

During the life of which I will be growing up, I don't like the idea of my parent trying to run my life. Because the way our parents were brought up is different these days. And I think they should try to understand how we feel. Times had changes and they could not keep us back. Regardless of whatever they said we are going do our thing. Because I'm a person that likes to party. And parents don't like to see me going out every weekends. So some weekends I stay home just to please them. My parents try to keep me in the house. But they just don't know that by keeping in the house, won't solve the problem. I like to party, but I also like to do my work in school. Then when weekend come I am somewhere in the streets. I guess the way my mother's was brought up was not to go anywhere. After school come straight home and all that other kind of stuff.

Kids today that are growing up are getting very wild. Since they reach a certain age. Thats why parents of today were having many problems with them. So they figure if they lock there kids up they might become better children. But if they only new, that they would

end up worse than how they was. One thing I noticed was that our parents had to respect there parents. Do you think the kids of today would do that No they just disrespect there parents.

I may love to party but I think respect comes first. If a child don't respect there parents its not allways the child fault. Its sometime has to do with the parents. Maybe while they was growing up the parents spoiled them. That sometime are the biggest problems. Because when the child reach that certain age when they see everything they won't. And the parents can't give it to them. It bring a great big deal of a problem. That's when the child stoped disrespecting her parents. It happen many times. When the child is young. She recieved anything she wanted. But after when she get older. She start asking for to much, which the parents can't afford. To spoil a child is a bad thing. Unless you know how to handle them when they reach that certain age.

Appendix E

Complete Editing Checklist

1. SYNTAX
   a. Sentence completeness
   b. Basic word order
   c. Basic modification (basic modification by using clauses, phrases and words)
   d. Advance sentences (parallel structures, variety)
2. PUNCTUATION
   a. End marks
   b. Basic inner punctuation (in a series, participles, adverbial and adjective clauses)
   c. Basic quotations (direct and indirect)
3. GRAMMAR
   a. Regular standard usage
   b. Subject/verb agreement
   c. Verb tense formations
   d. Irregular verbs
   e. Tense consistency
   f. Special usage (case with pronouns, agreement in unusual contexts)
4. CAPITALIZATION

5. SPELLING

   a. Syllabication

   b. Basic spelling patterns (doubled consonants, silent "e," etc.)

   c. Demons (commonly misspelled words)

6. VOCABULARY

   a. Word-class shifts (courage, courageous)

   b. Prefixes/Suffixes

   c. Diction/Precision in word choice

7. PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

   a. Topic sentence

   b. Concrete/relevant supporting details

   c. Transitional word and phrases

8. ESSAY STRUCTURE

   a. Thesis statement

   b. Subtopics relevant to/supportive of thesis

   c. Conclusion

Appendix F

Pretest/Posttest Results

Students	Pretest Scores			Posttest Scores		
	0-59%	60-79%	80-100%	0-59%	60-79%	80-100%
# 1		▲				▲
# 2	▲				▲	
# 3	▲			▲		
# 4		▲				▲
# 5	▲				▲	
# 6		▲				▲
# 7		▲				▲
# 8		▲				▲
# 9			▲			▲
#10			▲			▲
#11		▲			▲	
#12	▲				▲	
#13	▲					▲
#14			▲			▲
#15	▲			▲		
#16			▲			▲
#17			▲			▲
#18		▲				▲

Students	Pretest Scores			Posttest Scores		
	0-59%	60-79%	80-100%	0-59%	60-79%	80-100%
#19	▲				▲	
Total Percents	37%	37%	26%	11%	26%	63%

Appendix G

Student Writing Analysis Results

Students	0-69% Accuracy	80-100% Accuracy
# 1		▲
# 2		▲
# 3		▲
# 4		▲
# 5		▲
# 6		▲
# 7		▲
# 8		▲
# 9		▲
#10		▲
#11		▲
#12		▲
#13		▲
#14		▲
#15	▲	
#16		▲
#17		▲
#18		▲

Students	0-79% Accuracy	80-100% Accuracy
#19	____	▲
Total Percents	5%	95%

Appendix H

Student Survey Results

	Initial Survey Results	Final Survey Results	Percent of Change	
1. Dislike writing generally	11%	5%	6%	strongly agree
	11%	5%	6%	agree
	11%	11%	0%	have no opinion
	53%	63%	10%	disagree
	16%	16%	0%	strongly disagree
2. View writing as difficult	11%	11%	0%	strongly agree
	11%	5%	6%	agree
	11%	5%	6%	have no opinion
	47%	58%	11%	disagree
	21%	21%	0%	strongly disagree
3. Prefer individual choice of topics	53%	53%	0%	strongly agree
	42%	42%	0%	agree
	5%	5%	0%	have no opinion
	0%	0%	0%	disagree
	0%	0%	0%	strongly disagree
4. Associate writing well with career success	21%	32%	11%	strongly agree
	57%	57%	0%	agree
	11%	5%	6%	have no opinion
	11%	5%	6%	disagree
	0%	0%	0%	strongly disagree
5. Delay completing writing assignments	16%	11%	5%	strongly agree
	26%	26%	0%	agree
	0%	16%	16%	have no opinion
	42%	47%	5%	disagree
	16%	0%	16%	strongly disagree
6. Avoid editing/ proofing steps	5%	0%	5%	strongly agree
	5%	0%	5%	agree
	0%	5%	5%	have no opinion
	79%	74%	5%	disagree
	11%	21%	10%	strongly disagree

7. Know ways to revise writing	11%	26%	15%	strongly agree
	37%	74%	37%	agree
	11%	0%	11%	have no opinion
	32%	0%	32%	disagree
	11%	0%	11%	strongly disagree
8. Revise to improve writing grades	26%	42%	16%	strongly agree
	58%	58%	0%	agree
	11%	0%	11%	have no opinion
	5%	0%	5%	disagree
	0%	0%	0%	strongly disagree
9. Take pride in writing well	21%	26%	5%	strongly agree
	32%	47%	15%	agree
	32%	16%	16%	have no opinion
	16%	5%	11%	disagree
	0%	0%	0%	strongly disagree
10. Approve of editing groups	16%	37%	21%	strongly agree
	53%	53%	0%	agree
	11%	5%	6%	have no opinion
	16%	5%	11%	disagree
	5%	0%	5%	strongly disagree
11. Ask peers/ teachers to critique writing	11%	26%	15%	strongly agree
	47%	57%	11%	agree
	11%	5%	6%	have no opinion
	21%	11%	10%	disagree
	11%	0%	11%	strongly disagree
12. Learn from peers/ teachers	16%	26%	10%	strongly agree
	58%	63%	5%	agree
	21%	11%	10%	have no opinion
	5%	0%	5%	disagree
	0%	0%	0%	strongly disagree